

OFFICE OF
CHARLES A. FRANCIS

CHIEF JUDGE
SECOND JUDICIAL CIRCUIT

Attachment # 6
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LEON COUNTY COURTHOUSE
301 SOUTH MONROE STREET
TALLAHASSEE, FLORIDA 32301

August 20, 2003

Mr. Parwez Alam
Leon County Administrator
Leon County Courthouse
Tallahassee, FL 32301

Dear Mr. Alam:

At the County's request, an exhaustive study was conducted by our staff, including several meetings between Court Administration, Mediation Director Mark E. Becker, County Mediation Director Mark Palmquist, and County Attorney Herb Thiele regarding the feasibility of integrating the Neighborhood Justice Center into the court system. Presently, the Neighborhood Justice Center and the grants funding that program are under the supervision of Leon County.

After a thorough review of Article V, Revision 7 and the changes to funding of mediation programs set forth in Florida Statute 29.004, we regret that we will be unable to integrate the functions of the Neighborhood Justice Center into the court system or assume the responsibility of managing that program.

The operative statute that precludes our integration of the Neighborhood Justice Center into the court system is Chapter 29.004, which provides:

"(11) Mediation and arbitration, limited to trial court **referral of a pending judicial case** to a mediator or a court-related mediation program....for the limited purpose of encouraging and assisting the litigants in partially or completely settling the case prior to adjudication on the merits by the court."

Therefore, at this time we cannot assume the responsibility of managing the program. We will however, be willing to consider this issue once Article V, Revision 7 is fully implemented.

Sincerely yours,

Charles A. Francis
Chief Judge

cc: Herb Thiele, Leon County Attorney
Vince Long, Assistant County Administrator
~~Leon County Administration~~
Patsy Williams, Acting Court Administrator